

Smeeth Parish Council
Minutes of the Meeting
Held on Wednesday 28th September 2022 at 7.00pm at Brabourne Baptist Church.

Cllr Mrs Alford welcomed everyone to the meeting.
 Smeeth PC continues to express great sadness at the passing of HM Queen Elizabeth II. A minute silence was held to mark this moment.

To note those present.

Cllr Mrs Alford (HA), Cllr Rev Denyer (CD), Cllr Mrs Morey (JM) and Cllr Mrs Pereboom (VP).
 5 members of the public, Borough Cllr William Howard, and Mrs Block (Clerk) (TB).

1. To receive a presentation from Caldecott Foundation

Nick Barnett (Chief Executive) and Karan Hughes from the Caldecott Foundation attended the meeting.

Nick and Karan wanted to ensure the public were aware of the bonfire and BBQ event that they will be having on 5th November, where there will be a 10-minute firework display.

Nick explained that the Brabourne family had been very involved in the Caldecott society. The Caldecott Foundation provides residential homes, education and fostering services. The large site in Smeeth has turned around in the last 5 years with the buildings being updated. There were 9 day pupils attending the school when Nick arrived in 2017, there are now 50 and the school specialises with working with children with Autism.

Nick is hopeful that the Caldecott College will reopen sometime in the next 12 months, currently staff at Caldecott have been helping other children's homes and have assisted with reducing the number of children going missing significantly. Within the Caldecott Foundation, each child is assessed and given therapy as a bespoke service. The children who come to Caldecott have not had a positive start to their lives.

Previously the foundation was noisy and had a poor reputation but with the current leadership team, they have turned this around and helping locally with outreach programmes. Most of the children are local but there are a few who come from further afield like Yorkshire and Cornwall. Many of the previous residents came from London, this is not the case now.

There are 2 rooms on site that can be are hired out, the entire site has had £1.5 million invested over the last five years. In the future the leadership team are hoping to increase pupils to 70 but will keep the cohort small to help support the children.

There are a small number of boarding pupils who board with the foundation in order to keep their family together.

Once someone enters the foundation, they are supported for the rest of their lives.

An invitation was extended to the Parish Council to attend a visit of the school sites.

2. To receive a presentation from Colleen Loader regarding the "Stop Stonestreet Solar" campaign.

Colleen Loader and Sara Daly sent the following to the Clerk ahead of the meeting to introduce the "Stop Stonestreet Solar" campaign.

Sincere apologies Colleen and Sara cannot attend tonight's meeting in person. We have asked Tracey if she would read out the following for us:

We wanted to update you about the Stop Stonestreet Solar Campaign.

We are just getting going and it's just the two of us at the moment.

We met with Aldington villagers earlier this week and the clear mandate they have given us is to mount a campaign to fight to stop the proposed evolution power solar farm.

Although many at the meeting are supporters of the provision of sustainable energy, the

concerns about the loss of farmland override the provision of energy as the need for food is deemed as paramount.

We are seeking volunteers to help us with raising the profile of the campaign and would be grateful if the council could share this message in the parish council newsletter.

We will also share updates about the campaign on our soon to be launched Facebook page and a warm welcome is extended to everyone in Smeeth and Brabourne to join us at future campaign meetings, date of next meeting to be confirmed.

A member of the public asked what the objection to this was, the Chairman explained that it was the loss of farmland.

Cllr Howard reported that he had attended the most recent stakeholders meeting with Evolution Power. The plans are progressing and Evolution Power is looking to submit a definitive plan in the new year. The main objections appear to be the loss of farmland and the lack/changing of views. Aldington is very much affected however Smeeth is not as impacted. Cllr Howard explained that he would be looking to ensure commitments are kept and improvements to footpaths and the path network are made.

Another meeting is to take place in January. This development is very different to the EDF site, EDF have been working to reduce the impact and are double transporting the equipment to site. The EDF site is smaller and is looked at by Ashford Borough Council as a planning application, whereas the Evolution Power application will be looked at by the Planning Inspectorate. Cllr Howard is looking at the construction and deconstruction plans as the Smeeth crossroads will be impacted.

3. To receive and approve apologies for absence.

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Herrick and Baker.

4. To receive declarations of interest (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests). The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared.

There were no declarations of interest to be made.

5. To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 13th July 2022

The Parish Council approved the minutes as a true record and the Vice-Chairman signed these in the absence of the Chairman.

6. To discuss matters arising from previous minutes that are not covered by the agenda

There were no matters arising from the previous minutes not covered by the agenda.

7. Public session: To receive questions and comments from the public on any agenda item

A member of the public explained that he had an update on the land behind Ramstone Close. The owners of the site had originally given Quinn Estates 12 months to make a decision as to whether they would like the land, a further 12 months has now been provided.

Cllr Howard has been invited to meet with Quinn Estates, he will invite a member of Smeeth Parish Council to attend with him. On that site it was expected that there might be an extension of Fortescue Place but nothing further down. The site was looked at under the Local Plan but was deemed as too wet. Cllr Howard will copy the Clerk into correspondence with Quinn Estates.

8. To receive report from the Borough Councillor

Cllr Howard reported that he has been involved in 1 planning application at Brabourne which was the distillery, this was approved at planning committee.

Cllr Howard has been heavily involved in the licencing committee and the impact on taxi services. arrow taxis recently collapsed and this has had an impact on rural communities and school transport. The cap on the amount per mile has recently increased so taxis will be more expensive but it is important to keep companies on the road. New taxi companies have come

forward and most of the arrow taxi staff have successfully moved elsewhere. There have been fast tracked licences provided to help new start-ups and encourage new taxi firms.

All other work is now looking to the elections that will take place in May 2023. The waste contract is due to be renewed and reports are expected from the town centre work. The budget will be the final thing the Council is involved in before the end of the year. Currently the Borough Council is behind by £160,000 on savings. The impact of COVID and other economic factors have been felt. There is concern over next year's budget due to inflation.

JM asked William what was happening with the planning portal, it is very difficult to use, it is neither useful nor helpful. Cllr Howard agreed, it was released far too soon and the people working on it have been trying to fix fundamentals to make it work and catch up with a backlog of applications. This backlog is now starting to be cleared but the Council are concentrating on education to make it a usable tool. Previously there were multiple systems in place and this new system should work across the board for all.

The cabinet member is trying to resolve all the issues, the portal is working but it is not adequate yet. Cllr Howard expects there to be an investigation but there is no time frame for completion at present. The Clerk should soon hear about some training opportunity's on how to use the consultees process says under the new portal.

9. To receive an update on the Highways Improvement Plan and approve the expenditure

The Parish Council had received the proposed costings for the Village Gateways on Plain Road. This expenditure of £11,501.38 was approved by the Parish Council.

The HIP group will need to consider the new footpath to Evegate and return to KCC about the Smeeth Crossroads as there has been another crash on this site.

10. To discuss any issues relating to Footpaths and Highways

The Clerk is waiting to hear from RB about the A20 footpath.

11. Planning matters: to authorise a response to any application(s) and to note any recent planning decisions by Ashford Borough Council or any correspondence on planning matters.

11.1 To receive the report of the Planning committee

The Planning Report was received and a copy is kept on file.

11.2 To agree a response on any outstanding Planning Applications

The Parish Council raises no objections to the 2 current applications at Muddy Wellies or at the Chestnuts.

12. Financial matters:

To note the Parish Council's financial position.

a) To note the Parish Council's financial position as at 31/08/2022

The current financial position of the Parish Council was noted. The Parish Council has a balance of £93022.99 as of 31st August 2022.

b) To authorise any payments

Paul Rodway	£1720.18
P Rodway (drill bit)	£ 9.59
HMRC	£478.82
T Denne and Son	£237.60
Lister Wilder	£ 3.12
T Denne and Son	£118.80
HMRC	£508.43
P Rodway	£1690.57
KCC Kent Pension Fund	£693.64

Hastingleigh Garage	£55.00
Lister Wilder	£32.10
Lister Wilder	£100.80

Village Caretaker Account (VAT from 21-22)	£795.59
Parish Council Websites	£230.40
Mrs. Podd – litter picking	£199.50
T Block	£227.53
T Block	£227.53
HMRC	£113.60
PKF Littlejohn (Audit)	£360.00
T Block	£125.54
HMRC	£ 31.60
CLP	£600.00

c) To agree to remain opted in to the SAAA Central Auditor Appointment Arrangements

The Parish Council agreed to remain opted in to the SAAA Central Auditor Appointment Arrangements

13. To discuss a Young Person's Award as suggested by Brabourne Parish Council

The Clerk explained that Brabourne Parish Council had suggested a Young Person's Award. The Parish Council were interested in principle and suggest the details be agreed by a focus group.

14. To agree a website protocol concerning links to other websites

The Parish Council is often approached asking for website links to external businesses or services. The Parish Council discussed the issue and felt that it did not wish to be seen to endorse any particular business or service so would not be prepared to add links to services/businesses outside of the Parish Council remit.

15. To agree positioning of noticeboard and pay for 50% of the costs involved

The Parish Council had previously agreed to provide 50% of the noticeboard costs. The suggested positioning is to the right of the noticeboard.

16. To agree the contribution towards the memorial bench for M Hinchliffe

The Parish Council had been approached to agree the contribution of £300 towards the memorial bench for M Hinchliffe. The CLP is having trouble with the time between paying for the bench and receiving the funds from Cllr Howard. Smeeth PC agreed to pay the £300 from Cllr Howard ahead of receipt of the grant. The CLP will return these funds once received.

17. To agree to change bank accounts to Unity Trust Bank

The Parish Council have had a number of issues with the current bank and so agreed to change to Unity Trust Bank.

18. To discuss and approve adoption of the Draft Grant Awarding Policy

The Parish Council discussed the Draft Awarding Policy and approved the adoption of this. All Community Groups will be asked to complete a Grant Application Form in line with this new policy. A copy will be available online.

19. To receive any outstanding correspondence

There was no other outstanding correspondence

20. To receive any updates from the Playing Field Association

The most recent meeting of the Playing Field Association was postponed and no date has yet been agreed. The Parish Council agreed to reinstate the funding.

21. To receive any updates from the Village Caretaker Scheme

The Caretaker Scheme continues well. The van has passed its MOT. Any issues you feel need to be addressed by the Caretaker, please contact The Clerk who will pass these on as appropriate.

22. To receive any updates from the Speed Watch Group

The following had been received from Graham Snazelle:

I will not be able to organise any more Speedwatch sessions until November as I am about to start the whole month of October with radiotherapy. Also, it appears that we may have lost some volunteers. We now only have 4 members & without some more volunteers, it will be difficult to supply the village with the service.

The Parish Council received figures from July and August and were very impressed with the efforts.

23. To receive any updates from the Community Led Plan Group

There was no update from the Community Led Plan Group although there had been a number of emails regarding the memorial bench.

24. Any Other Business (for information purposes only):

VP reported on the latest Newsflash:

A newsletter was issued on the 15th of September:

Remembering HM Queen Elizabeth II:

Number of recipients: 376

Open rate: 278 (74.1%)

Clicks per unique open: 13 (3.5%) – including 5 clicks on the Buckingham Palace website link.

Another newsletter regarding the Kent Police Community Engagement Event was issued today, but it's too early to report on that.

The Clerk had not received a response regarding the defibrillator from Jerry Newson.

25. Determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the Council up to and including the next annual meeting of the Council.

Wednesday 9th November 2022

Wednesday 8th March 2023

Wednesday 11th January 2023

Wednesday 10th May 2023

26. Resolution to exclude the public

Resolved: That under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, because of the confidential nature of the business to be dealt with, the Public and Press leave the meeting during discussion of items 27 & 28 (Co-option of a new Councillor and agree the Clerk's salary following the gaining of the CiLCA).

27. To agree the co-option of a new Councillor

The Parish Council discussed the applicants who have expressed an interest in being a Councillor, the majority vote casting in favour of Mr Stewart Grant. Paperwork is to be forwarded to him by the Clerk for completion. The Parish Council is grateful for the interest expressed by both parties.

28. To agree the Clerk's salary following the gaining of the CiLCA

The Parish Council agreed to increase the Clerk's salary to SCP 16, for increments for 2020-21 and 2021-22 and the gaining of the CiLCA.

The Parish Council also agreed that they would increase the working from home allowance for the Clerk to the NALC/SLCC recommendation of £15/month to pay for lighting/heating costs for those who work from home.

The meeting closed at 9.00pm.